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Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

Sixty-third session

Summary record of the 3rd meeting
Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva, on Tuesday, 13 March 2018, at 10 a.m.

Chair: Ms. Bras Gomes

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Consideration of reports (*continued*)

(a) Reports submitted by States parties in accordance with articles 16 and 17 of the Covenant (*continued*)

Combined fifth and sixth periodic reports of Mexico (*continued*) (E/C.12/MEX/5-6; E/C.12/MEX/Q/5-6 and E/C.12/MEX/Q/5-6/Add.1)

1. *At the invitation of the Chair, the delegation of Mexico took places at the Committee table.*

2. **Mr. Ruiz Cabañas** (Mexico) said, in respect of the fight against corruption, that thousands of civil servants and public officials had been detained, arrested, put on trial or extradited from other countries back to Mexico on corruption charges. Those found guilty had been reprimanded, suspended, lost their positions, been banned from taking other public positions or been subject to economic sanctions. Between December 2012 and early March 2018, 4,789 civil servants had received private reprimands for administrative failings, 6,313 had received public reprimands, 1,153 had been fired, 5,096 had been deprived of their responsibilities, 3,295 had received economic sanctions and 6,982 had been removed from their positions.

3. The federal Mechanism for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders and Journalists protected persons in those professions who believed that they could be targeted by a third party for any reason, and was managed by a board comprised of four members of the federal government, four representatives of civil society and a representative of the National Human Rights Commission. Any persons could approach the Mechanism, and could be assigned protection, including surveillance and alarm systems, depending on the degree of risk they faced. The federal Government was committed to increasing the budget for the Mechanism and coordinating its activities with state governments.

4. After a series of attacks against human rights defenders and journalists in 2017, meetings had been held in May of that year with the governors and public security secretaries of all 32 federative entities to agree on new coordination protocols between the federal and state governments to provide increased protection to those persons. In comparison to the equivalent period in 2017, there had been a fall in the number of attacks in the first months of 2018. There was evidence that some of them had been carried out by criminal organizations, and investigations were being conducted by the Mechanism and, in the more serious cases, by the Office of the Special Prosecutor for the Investigation of Crimes against Journalists and Human Rights Defenders.

5. **Mr. Lara Cabrera** (Mexico) said that programmes had been introduced pursuant to the General Act on the Rights of Children and Adolescents and under the National Comprehensive Family Development System to afford comprehensive protection and care for the approximately 140,000 children and teenagers living on the street, with the provision of food and other forms of assistance nationwide. There was an additional system of social integration and protection for persons living on the street in Mexico City.

6. **Mr. Ruiz Cabañas** (Mexico) said that, although it was generally considered a high-income country, Mexico was in fact a middle-income country. Incomes in northern and central Mexico were up to six or seven times higher than in the south of the country, notably the regions of Chiapas, Guerrero and Oaxaca. Consequently, in 2014, a new policy to combat extreme poverty had been implemented in southern Mexico with the designation of certain areas as special economic zones to encourage entrepreneurship and creativity, including through tax reductions and business development schemes.

7. **Ms. Gastélum** (Mexico) said that the PROSPERA social inclusion programme, created to improve prosperity and lift people out of poverty, had been re-developed to focus on food, health, education and outreach. A total of 6,857,000 households, comprising approximately 30 million people, had signed up to the programme, which was available in all municipalities and 56.3 per cent of localities. New components had been added, including labour inclusion, basic education, scholarships and the empowerment of women.

The vast majority of families signed up to PROSPERA had reported reductions in extreme poverty, food scarcity and marginalization. The programme prioritized indigenous persons, Afrodescendent persons, older persons and children, and the introduction of a new identity card made it possible for those enrolled to access its resources directly.

8. **Mr. Kawa Karasik** (Mexico) said that, according to a 2016 midpoint survey on health and nutrition, 33.2 per cent of children, 36.3 per cent of teenagers and 71.2 of adults were overweight or obese. The contributing factors included the wide availability and consumption of high-calorie beverages, which accounted for approximately 22 per cent of calories consumed, and inadequate sales of fruit and vegetables in marginalized areas, with 21.3 per cent of people not buying fresh produce on a regular basis. The Government response had included the National Strategy for the Prevention and Control of Overweight, Obesity and Diabetes, which aimed to curb the increase in weight gain and the rise in non-communicable diseases, particularly type 2 diabetes, through public health programmes, comprehensive medical care and a pro-health tax policy.

9. The creation of the Mexican Observatory for Non-Communicable Diseases and its advisory committee had led to the development of goals and indicators at the federal and state levels, in addition to educational health-related media campaigns. Mobile units had been introduced to provide food, guidance on healthy eating, breastfeeding assistance and technological support to promote active lifestyles among people with diabetes. Sales indicated that the 10 per cent tax on sugary drinks and 8 per cent tax on high-calorie foods introduced in January 2014 had had a moderate impact on the sales of such products.

10. Health was promoted as a strategic axis of education policy in order to raise public awareness of healthy lifestyles and physical activity and to promote personal responsibility for health. Under the national healthy eating programme, more low-calorie foods and drinks were being sold in schools. Information was given on traditional cultural diets, government healthy eating guidance had been translated into 17 indigenous languages, and work was being undertaken to produce relevant radio programmes in indigenous languages.

11. **Mr. Chemor Ruiz** (Mexico) said that the health component of the PROSPERA programme provided products for children, pregnant women and breastfeeding mothers, including milk substitutes and food supplements for infants aged between 6 and 59 months. Over 300 million doses had been distributed to mothers and children as of March 2018, and they had been taken up by over 90 per cent of persons eligible to receive them. Development work to make the supplements easier to use and improve their taste was ongoing. In addition, primary health-care centres had teams to monitor children's development, including their height and weight. According to a midpoint survey conducted by the National Institute of Medical Sciences and Nutrition, cases of anaemia had decreased by 55 per cent among children under 5 and by 11.5 per cent among women, and there had been a 2.2 increase in the concentration of haemoglobin among women. The rate of children under 5 of below average height had fallen by 37 per cent.

12. The Government was working with bodies including the United Nations Children's Fund, the Inter-American Development Bank, the World Bank and the National Public Health Institute on an early child development strategy focusing on the first 1,000 days of a child's life, including pregnancy. The strategy would be implemented in tandem with other national programmes with the aim of improving motor, cognitive, social and emotional skills. A "traffic light" system had been established to evaluate child development, with children rated "green" if they were developing normally, "amber" if there was a risk of slow development in any area and "red" if they were not developing normally. There were 30 units nationwide supporting approximately 255,000 children in the "red" category, who underwent further tests and evaluations to support their development. Over 28,500 children had already been reclassified as "green".

13. **Ms. Bautista Valdez** (Mexico) said that the conflict in Chiapas had been caused by local border disputes and had led to widespread violence and the displacement of nine settlements. Interim resolution measures had been accepted and applied in February 2018. As of March 2018, 65 per cent of the population had returned to their places of origin with the assistance of the Ministry of Civil Protection, the Ministry of Security and Citizen Protection and the local authorities. The National Human Rights Commission had carried

out visits to support the return of displaced persons, and had provided food, housing, sanitary products and medical assistance.

14. **Mr. Salazar Gil** (Mexico) said that, under the General Act on Victims, an Executive Commission for the Care of Victims had been set up to provide comprehensive reparations. The Act included victims of internal displacement in the definition of possible victims of human rights violations. Following a recommendation by the National Human Rights Commission, the Executive Commission provided help to victims of internal displacement, with nine such persons currently receiving assistance, in addition to others who had been victims of crimes or other human rights violations. Reparations and support measures had been provided to victims in Chiapas, for example.

15. **Mr. Ruiz Cabañas** (Mexico) said that a number of areas of Mexico experienced water stress, which had made it necessary for the National Water Commission to engage in expensive, large-scale infrastructure work to ensure access to water. Such projects could be complex as, although there was a federal system responsible for infrastructure, the local authorities within each state set regional water consumption quotas. While a high percentage of people in Mexico had access to water and sanitation in their communities, infrastructure for the local maintenance of the water system was not necessarily in place in urban and remote rural areas. Reduced oil prices in recent years had led to a smaller national budget. However, the federal Government intended to continue to allocate resources to water infrastructure and compensate for reduced investment in recent years. In 2017, the Special Rapporteur on the human rights to safe drinking water and sanitation had visited Mexico and the Government had taken his recommendations into consideration.

16. **Ms. Román Narváez** (Mexico) said that a national data-collection system had been established to collect and process data on water, with a view to facilitating the development, implementation and assessment of relevant policies. Awareness-raising and educational programmes aimed at target groups and the general population had been developed to encourage the sustainable use of resources. For example, a range of leisure, cultural and sporting activities had been organized within the framework of the "Mexico with Water" campaign. Municipal authorities had their own water regulations and implemented measures to prevent the unnecessary waste of water; water rates and services varied among municipalities. The federal Government was working with local authorities to improve services and expand coverage, particularly to vulnerable groups living in urban and rural areas. Significant efforts had also been made to strengthen the water and sanitation infrastructure, to improve the management of water resources and to preserve aquifers. The National Water Commission monitored the water sector to ensure compliance with national norms, and the quality of drinking water was certified by the Ministry of Health.

17. **Mr. Luna Gordillo** (Mexico) said that maternal mortality, including deaths linked to abortion procedures, was a priority health-care issue. Indeed, the Government's efforts, including through the implementation of a maternal and perinatal mortality prevention programme and specialized care services, had contributed to a significant drop in the maternal death rate. In cases involving rape, recent amendments to legislation on domestic, sexual and gender-based violence had established criteria on care for victims, including training for health-care staff on post-rape care and access to abortion.

18. **Ms. Eternod Arámburu** (Mexico) said that efforts to amend legislation on abortion met with a high level of resistance from certain groups in the country. Mexico City was the only place in the country where abortion was permitted at the request of the woman during the first trimester of pregnancy. Other federal states had varying restrictions on abortion. In some, it was allowed for reasons including fetal malformation or financial hardship. Encouraging results had been achieved in preventing pregnancies in girls under the age of 14 through the inter-institutional approach of the National Strategy to Prevent Adolescent Pregnancies. Nevertheless, various challenges still needed to be overcome to ensure access to health care for all, particularly services that respected women's sexual and reproductive rights. The Government acknowledged the need to uphold the rights of women and children.

19. **Ms. Martínez Uriarte** (Mexico) said that a number of *amparo* cases concerning girls and the right to abortion following rape were currently before the Supreme Court.

While the Court upheld the right to access abortion services in the case of rape, some of the victims had brought their cases too late for abortion to be allowed.

20. **Mr. Lara Cabrera** (Mexico) said that the National Crusade against Hunger was designed to coordinate social inclusion and welfare programmes aimed at combating extreme food poverty and providing support to the most vulnerable groups; its implementation had led to a drop in food poverty levels. While the Government had reduced the number of programmes covered by the strategy from 90 to 50, those cuts had been made in order to avoid duplication of efforts and resources and to ensure that programmes were effectively targeted, in compliance with criteria established by the Auditor General.

21. **Mr. Sepúlveda Iguíniz** (Mexico) said that measures to involve the business sector in promoting human rights, as part of the Government's comprehensive human rights strategy, had included encouraging companies to incorporate the principles established by the United Nations into their business policies. The Government was committed to ensuring the full participation of all stakeholders, including the business sector, civil society organizations and indigenous communities, in developing a national action plan on human rights in business that focused on issues such as the right to prior, free and informed consultation, access to justice, protection for human rights defenders and journalists, due diligence and non-discrimination and contained a section on economic, social and cultural rights.

22. **Ms. Liebenberg** said that she would be interested to know what steps the Government was taking to guarantee access to affordable and adequate housing, particularly for low income groups, including through measures to counteract the commercialization of housing stock and real estate speculation. In view of reports of forced evictions, she asked what measures existed to prevent eviction, including procedural safeguards and access to legal remedies and alternative accommodation.

23. **Mr. Sadi** asked the delegation to clarify whether abortions could be performed on grounds of financial hardship. Noting the need to invest to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, he said that he wondered whether money earmarked for military spending could not be better used to meet the State's obligations under the Covenant. He would appreciate further information on the budgetary resources allocated to development programmes and the level of military expenditure. The delegation was also invited to comment further on the high crime rate in Mexico.

24. **Mr. Uprimny** (Country Task Force) said that clarification would be appreciated regarding measures to promote women's participation in the labour market, including whether government policies took women's role in the care economy into account. Referring to a study conducted by the World Health Organization showing that, in Mexico, maternal mortality rates were closely linked to socioeconomic status, he wished to know what measures the Government was taking to ensure that the Covenant was applied throughout the country, without any limitations or exceptions, in compliance with the provisions of its article 28. Lastly, there was evidence of a high prevalence of hepatitis C among drug users. What measures was the Government taking to tackle the problem and to expand its network of drug treatment centres?

25. **Ms. Shin** said that there were significant discrepancies between states and different population groups, for example indigenous women and those living in rural areas, with regard to access to health services. In relation to tackling teen pregnancy, what awareness-raising measures had been developed to target men and boys and what was the State doing to change men's attitudes and challenge gender stereotypes?

26. **Mr. Windfuhr** asked what the Government's priorities were with regard to social security coverage and which priority groups needed social protection most urgently.

27. **Mr. De Schutter** said that, with regard to sections of the population not reached by the National Crusade against Hunger, the Government might consider adopting a rights-based approach to ensure that programmes were properly targeted and mechanisms were established to provide for redress if people were denied benefits. The PROSPERA social inclusion programme might serve as a template for action.

28. **Mr. Mancisidor de la Fuente** (Country Rapporteur), focusing on the protection provided to agricultural day labourers and domestic workers, who constituted a vulnerable group, said that he would appreciate information on the labour inspection system, including the number of inspectors and the follow-up measures implemented. Statistics from sources such as the National Autonomous University of Mexico indicated that more than 3 million children were working in Mexico, including just over 1 million under the age of 14. As federal labour legislation prohibited child labour and considered children a group in need of protection, he would be interested to know what measures were being taken to combat child labour.

29. He asked what protection was afforded to the families of disappeared persons, including measures to protect their economic, social and cultural rights, such as access to education. The delegation was also invited to comment on the reasons behind the discrepancies in access to health between rural and urban areas, and whether unequal access to health in such cases constituted a form of discrimination.

30. **Mr. Cerqueda López** (Mexico) said that the shortage of affordable housing was a problem inherited from previous administrations; the Government was taking steps to ensure access to adequate housing through a range of programmes, which included: measures to redefine urban residential perimeters and ensure that new housing had good access to services and infrastructure; subsidies to facilitate access to housing for vulnerable groups; and help for various groups, including workers and those living in rural areas, to build their own homes.

31. **Mr. Ruiz Cabañas** (Mexico) said that the Government was committed to sustainable development and had adopted legislation to ensure that the State budget took the Sustainable Development Goals into account. He stressed that, compared with other States, a very small proportion of the national budget was allocated to military spending. Although Mexico did have a high crime rate, the Government was working with local and regional authorities to tackle the problem. It was a major challenge, but not dissimilar to that faced by neighbouring countries.

32. **Ms. Eternod Aráburu** (Mexico) said that the Government continued to face significant legislative challenges with regard to maternal mortality and abortion. In the state of Yucatán, abortion was legal if the mother had more than three children and wished to terminate the pregnancy for economic reasons. Mexico had a national strategy to combat adolescent pregnancy, which included the provision of education on sexuality, gender equality, respect for diversity and violence prevention, the creation of tailored health services for adolescents of both genders, especially in rural and indigenous communities, the establishment of specialized government groups and the introduction of indicators to monitor progress. As concerned women in the labour market, the Government was fully aware that they were at a disadvantage, as they also carried out the majority of domestic and care work. A national care system needed to be developed to relieve women of that burden.

33. **Mr. Ruiz Cabañas** (Mexico) said that significant coordination was required to ensure that the Covenant was implemented fully throughout Mexico at federal, state and local level. As some local governments did not have the resources to fund initiatives related to economic, social and cultural rights, resources needed to be provided at other levels. Efforts were being made to implement policies agreed on at all levels of government in order to reduce such imbalances. Youth Integration Centres were working in close cooperation with the Ministry of Health to combat drug addiction. As a result, Mexico had achieved one of the lowest rates of heroin consumption in the region.

34. **Mr. Chemor Ruiz** (Mexico) said that women and children were accorded priority with regard to social security. The Twenty-First Century Health-Care Programme had been designed specifically to provide care for all children under the age of 5, and the majority of the budget for the People's Health Insurance Scheme was allocated to pre and postnatal care. It was difficult to gather accurate data on the number of individuals without medical coverage. As part of efforts to ensure that patients received adequate treatment, 1,619 employees of the People's Health Insurance Scheme had been placed in hospitals to ensure that patients covered by social security received the correct treatment. If a person not

covered by social security or the People's Health Insurance Scheme arrived at a health-care centre, he or she was immediately registered with the Scheme and given medical attention. Private schemes also existed, but, unlike the People's Health Insurance Scheme, they would not accept individuals with pre-existing conditions.

35. **Ms. Gastélum** (Mexico) said that access to social programmes was regulated through the Citizens' Services Directorate and user-driven neighbourhood committees, which were expanding the social programmes to better meet the needs of people of African descent and senior citizens. A new census of the beneficiaries of the PROSPERA programme was also under way.

36. **Mr. Lara Cabrera** (Mexico) said that the Government had begun to adopt a rights-based approach in the legislation that it produced, such as the General Act on the Rights of Children and Adolescents.

37. **Mr. Arrellano Cuan** (Mexico) said that Mexico had an employment integration policy and equal opportunity legislation to encourage women's participation in work. According to data from 2016, women's participation in formal employment had increased by 5.6 per cent compared with the previous year, and women represented 38 per cent of the economically active population. Steps had also been taken to address sexual harassment in the workplace, including through the introduction of advisers and zero-tolerance policies in most federal agencies. In addition, more than 700 inspectors had been appointed to ensure that the rights of day labourers in the agricultural sector were respected and to introduce precautionary measures where required. The number of working children had dropped from 3.3 million in 2013 to 2.5 million in 2015. In addition, the number of children and adolescents considered as being at risk of entering employment had dropped from 801,600 in 2014 to 38,000 in 2015. Between September 2016 and June 2017, labour inspectors had identified 4,000 child workers and applied appropriate sanctions.

38. **Mr. Sepúlveda Iguíniz** (Mexico) said that, with regard to the family members of disappeared persons, new legislation had been introduced to ensure that the procedure for official declarations of absence took no longer than six months, thereby allowing matters such as parental authority, inheritance, access to social security benefits and the suspension of legal proceedings to be resolved. In addition, the Executive Commission for Victim Support was authorized to intervene directly to ensure that the family's rights to health care, education and compensation were respected. The General Act on Victims included the concept of both direct and indirect victims, such as the family.

39. **Mr. Uprimny** said that, while the educational framework and level of funding for education in the country were, on the whole, good, he wished to know what was being done to combat the stagnating quality of education; to help marginalized groups and persons with disabilities gain access to and remain in education; and to reduce inequalities in the quality of education provided. Although access to preschool education was guaranteed in the Constitution, he would like to hear what was being done to ensure that universal coverage was achieved in practice. It would also be interesting to know what steps the Government had taken to combat the obstacles faced by migrants, refugees and persons with disabilities with regard to gaining access to education and to bring other legislation into line with the Federal Act on the Prevention and Elimination of Discrimination with regard to the rights of persons with disabilities.

40. He asked what measures had been taken to support cultural and ethnic diversity through the demarcation and protection of indigenous territories and to ensure that the entire population was able to participate in cultural life. It would also be interesting to know what strategies had been adopted to boost investment in science and technology, as it accounted for only 0.5 per cent of the gross domestic product. As the majority of the population remained without Internet access, he asked what steps had been taken to provide universal access, in particular for vulnerable groups.

41. **Mr. Ruiz Cabañas** (Mexico) said that the Government was aware that there had been problems concerning the quality of education and it had therefore carried out a cross-cutting structural reform of the sector. A lack of budgetary resources had, however, meant that the Government had needed to prioritize other activities over increasing the investment in science and technology.

42. **Ms. Morales Garza** (Mexico) said that Mexico had achieved good educational coverage overall. Investment in educational infrastructure was at a historic high, and 65 per cent of those funds were destined for schools in rural and indigenous areas. Programmes were also in place to provide resources directly to schools and improve school conditions. Education on socioemotional skills and gender equality was provided, and schools were permitted to set 20 per cent of the curriculum autonomously, according to their needs. Native languages and Spanish as a second language were also an integral part of the education system. Educational coverage among indigenous persons between the ages of 6 and 14 had reached 94.4 per cent, and speakers of indigenous languages were involved heavily in designing courses and educational materials.

43. Programmes were also in place that promoted accessibility to education for persons with disabilities and for indigenous and migrant groups. The National Institute of Adult Education was working to combat adult illiteracy in Spanish and in indigenous languages and to promote productive skills. Steps had also been taken to establish more preschools in rural areas, promote digital literacy programmes in indigenous schools and update secondary-level distance learning programmes. In addition, 77,000 scholarships had been created to help indigenous persons access upper secondary and higher education.

44. **Mr. Chacha Antele** (Mexico) said, with regard to protecting cultural and ethnic diversity, that the Ministry of Culture was working with the Senate to discuss legislative amendments aimed at providing greater protection for the traditional practices of indigenous groups and the natural resources used in traditional medicine. Academics and members of indigenous communities had been invited to participate in the next such meeting. The National Institute of Indigenous Languages was developing reference materials on human rights, disease prevention, labour rights and the National Anti-Corruption System and was carrying out awareness-raising campaigns to promote indigenous languages.

45. Although the budget for cultural activities had been reduced, the Ministry of Culture was working to ensure that none of its main programmes were affected. Particular efforts had been made to encourage cultural activities in vulnerable areas through the establishment of collectives to promote peace in areas that had suffered from violence and through the creation of cultural facilities in areas of high migration. Programmes had been introduced to promote productive leisure activities and strengthen community life, finance cultural projects in Afro-Mexican, indigenous and rural communities and protect cultural heritage. Commissions comprised of academics, indigenous advocates and civil society actors played a key role in all those programmes.

46. **Mr. González** (Mexico) said that, while investment in science and technology was currently only just over 0.5 per cent of gross domestic product, that level was nevertheless higher than the figure of 0.4 per cent at which it had stood for the two decades prior to 2012. It was based on a number of strategies. The first was to maintain the country's scientific resources. In 2017, the national system of research workers had numbered 25,000 members. Some 60,000 students were currently benefiting from national and international scholarships, compared with just 20,000 students in 2006. More than 1,000 young researchers were working on 700 institutional projects. The National Council of Science and Technology ran a network comprising 27 centres and more than 100 offices throughout the country, including in states with a paucity of resources for investment in science and technology.

47. The second strategy involved the promotion of regional scientific and technological development. A total of 32 innovation centres had been established and each state's agenda had been tailored to meet its human, geographical and scientific needs. With a view to implementing the agendas, funds had been established to finance scientific innovation projects. During the period from 2009 to 2016, support had been provided for 3,000 state-level projects.

48. The third strategy involved measures to increase collaboration between federal governmental bodies and the National Council of Science and Technology. Some 25 trust funds in the fields of education, health and energy had been created to promote joint investment, innovation and creativity in key areas of science and technology. Steps were

also being taken to promote private investment in technological development. Cooperation with strategic European, Latin American and North American countries was also being pursued.

49. **Ms. Garza** (Mexico) said that the Ministry of Public Education had decided to ensure that the budgetary funds for all programmes — for reform schools, full-time schools and schools in the "decent schools" programme, and for the coexistence and digital literacy programmes — gave priority to the needs of the most vulnerable population groups, including indigenous peoples, persons with disabilities and migrants. The Programme for Inclusion and Equity in Education sought to promote academic progress and provided diverse technical assistance and equipment. Textbooks in Braille were provided under the free textbook programme for students with visual impairments. Accessibility standards were observed and special services were provided in schools for almost half a million persons with disabilities. There were also special centres equipped to address the needs of persons with severe disabilities. There were 7,400 educational centres for migrant farm workers, and material was provided in their native languages. Funds were also allocated under the free textbook programme for children whose mother tongue was not Spanish attending some 20,000 schools. Special contracts were issued to teachers working with migrants, and a new language plan provided for the identification of pupils for whom Spanish was a second language in order to address their needs.

50. **Mr. Cabrera** (Mexico) said that access to the Internet had increased from 22.2 per cent in 2010 to 47 per cent in 2016. Article 6 of the Constitution required the State to guarantee access to information and communication technology, a requirement that was reflected in the Federal Telecommunications and Broadcasting Act. There was a pilot programme on digital inclusion and the "Connected Mexico" strategy promoted telecommunication networks in public facilities such as schools. It focused on improving the quality of public services and reducing the digital gap by providing free access to the Internet to the general public.

51. **Mr. Ruiz Cabañas** (Mexico), responding to a question about the impact of the tax reform on inequality, said that income inequality had been quite high in recent decades. Prior to the tax reform of 2013, the country's Gini index had stood at 47.38 per cent, which was a higher level than that of most member States of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. As fiscal policy was a highly efficient means of remedying inequality, the tax reform was estimated to have brought about a considerable reduction in the index, placing Mexico at approximately the same level as the Republic of Korea and Chile. There had been an improvement in income distribution, since the Government had more funds to allocate to vulnerable groups. However, further efforts were required to develop a more equitable taxation system.

52. **Mr. Mancisidor de la Fuente** said that he would like additional information regarding training programmes for teaching staff in indigenous languages at all levels of education. He welcomed the fact that 33 per cent of the 25,000 members of the national system of research workers were women, compared to 21 per cent 20 years previously, but pointed out that the equivalent ratio in neighbouring countries of Latin America and the Caribbean was about 45 per cent. Lastly, in recent years the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) had shifted from a protective approach to heritage issues to a participatory approach. He asked whether there had been a similar shift in Mexico.

53. **Mr. Sadi**, noting that human rights were taught as a subject in the State party's schools, asked whether economic, social and cultural rights were included in the syllabus. He also asked whether the education system sought to combat extremism and radicalism. He enquired about the extent to which the Internet and smartphones were controlled to ensure that they were not used to spread terrorism and extremism.

54. **Mr. Uprimny** said that the educational reform undertaken in 2012 had been criticized on three main grounds: it had allegedly been approved without the participation of the parties concerned; it had tended to homogenize the population rather than reflect cultural diversity; and it had adversely affected teachers' employment rights. He would also

be interested to receive additional information on the demarcation of indigenous territory and on indigenous land guarantees.

55. **Ms. Garza** (Mexico) said that trained staff, pedagogical innovation and appropriate equipment and resources were required to cater for diversity in the education system. Ten years previously, only 20 per cent of teachers working with indigenous groups had held a bachelor's or postgraduate degree. Currently more than 75 per cent had degrees and were bilingual. The use of indigenous languages was promoted in educational establishments. The National Educational Evaluation Institute had assessed teachers' language skills, including for indigenous programmes. The training modules also comprised human rights courses on themes such as inclusion, equity, respect for diversity and gender equality. Furthermore, local communities participated in the development of textbooks and curricula.

56. The educational reform undertaken in 2012 had been carefully structured to cover all sectors of the education system. With regard to participation, regional forums bringing together entrepreneurs, speakers of indigenous languages, teachers and academics had been held in 2014. Two years later, in 2016, key educational documents and curricula had been reviewed in consultation forums involving indigenous communities, parents, children and adolescents, academics and representatives of trade unions. Consultations had also been conducted via the Internet. The resulting curriculum provided for comprehensive education, but also permitted a certain amount of flexibility, enabling teachers to take the cultural context into account.

57. The Ministry of Public Education was required to provide high-quality education without discrimination on any ground. The work of 1.3 million of the country's 1.5 million teachers had been assessed to ensure that they met the requisite high standards. Where the targets were not met, remedial action involving all stakeholders was being taken to address the challenges.

58. **Mr. Ruiz Cabañas** (Mexico) said that his country agreed with the UNESCO approach to the protection of natural and cultural heritage sites. Mexico ranked sixth in the world in terms of the number of recognized sites. Unfortunately the earthquake in September 2017 had adversely affected a number of sites. An international cooperation programme had been launched to obtain technical and financial support for their reparation or reconstruction. The Gulf of California porpoise was an endemic species and the Ministry of the Environment and Natural Resources was implementing an extremely expensive programme to save the species.

59. Extremism and radicalism did not present a major challenge in Mexico. The reformed education system sought to inculcate a sense of civic duty, to promote a human rights culture and to prevent radical and extremist ideas from flourishing.

60. **Mr. González** (Mexico) said that he agreed that the percentage of women participants in the national system of research workers was low. He noted, however, that 42 per cent of the 1,200 lecturer positions reserved for young people had been occupied by women in 2016.

61. **Mr. Mancisidor de la Fuente** commended the delegation on the quality and comprehensiveness of its replies to the Committee's questions and its willingness to acknowledge certain shortcomings. He urged the State party to disseminate the Committee's concluding observations and recommendations widely among its population.

62. **Mr. Ruiz Cabañas** (Mexico) assured the Committee that the important issues raised during the dialogue would be carefully analysed and that all its recommendations would be taken into account.

63. **The Chair** said that the Committee, in line with its follow-up procedure, would highlight three issues requiring urgent attention and would request the State party to respond within 18 months. With regard to the State party's involvement in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, she pointed out that the Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals were mere tools towards a final goal, which included achievement of the rights enshrined in the Covenant. She therefore requested the State party to mainstream the Committee's concluding observations in the work of the National Council for the 2030 Agenda.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.